

NOTES ON SOME REPTILES FROM THE HERBERT RIVER, QUEENSLAND.

BY WILLIAM MACLEAY, F.L.S., &c.

I received a few days ago from Mr. Archibald Boyd of Ripple Creek, Herbert River, an earthenware jar containing specimens in spirits of several species of bats, muridæ, antechini, lizards and snakes. A very cursory glance at the contents of the jar satisfied me that Mr. Boyd had hit upon a new and untried and also a very prolific field for the Zoologist. The mammals I have not yet examined in detail, but I believe that most of them are of undescribed species. Of the reptiles, I herewith give a list. Of Lizards there were three species.

1. ODATRIA OCELLATA.

A species of wide distribution in tropical Queensland.

2. LIASIS PUNCTULATA.

Found everywhere throughout Australia.

3. TIARIS BOYDII. n. sp.

Of a reddish brown colour, with seven or eight narrow dark-brown fasciæ on the body, and similar but indistinct fasciæ on the tail and feet; the front of the head and nape is greyish, the sides of the head stone blue, the gular pouch and the space between the tympanum of the eye yellow, and the under side of the body greyish-yellow. The front of the head is triangular and shelving, a little concave except above the orbits, and covered with minute roughly keeled scales; sides of the head covered with small non-imbricate scales or tubercles, very small on the eyelids, and largest below the mouth, and behind the ear expanding into a few ivory looking tubercles of larger size. The gular pouch is covered with very minute pointed scales, with broad, pointed, compressed, triangular teeth along its median fold. On the nape, there is a large compressed skinny crest, densely covered with very small smooth scales, and armed with three or four erect, broad, pointed, triangular, very compressed bony teeth. The scales of the back and sides of the body are small and more or less keeled, and the ridge of the back is armed from the nape to

well down the tail, with acute, very much compressed triangular spines; the scales of the legs are keeled and those of the tail very strongly so; occasionally bands of larger keeled scales cross the tail at irregular intervals. The scales of the belly are larger and more strongly keeled than those of the back.

There are no head shields, excepting the upper and lower rostrals, and a long low series of upper and lower labials.

Length of head and body 6 inches, length of tail 12 inches.

In every other species of *Tiaris* I have seen, the dorsal crest is formed of erect triangular compressed scales, in the present species the armature on the occipital and dorsal ridges is distinctly bony.

The Ophidians of the collection number seven.

1. ACANOTHPHIS ANTARCTICA or Death Adder.

This snake has been found in all parts of Australia, but I should say that the East Coast of New South Wales is its most common habitat.

2. MORELIA VARIEGATA. The Carpet Snake of the Colonists.

It is found in all parts of Australia, but is certainly least abundant in Eastern New South Wales. It seems to take the place of the Diamond Snake (*Morelia spilota*) in the tropical Queensland brushes and the arid deserts of Central Australia.

3. VERMICELLA ANNULATA.

A venomous snake, but little deadly. It is found in all parts of this country.

4. TROPIDONOTUS PICTURATUS.

Only a small and injured specimen, which may probably be another species of the genus.

The three following species are undoubtedly new.

5. TROPIDONOTUS ANGUSTICEPS. n. sp.

Scales in fifteen rows.

Abdominal plates... ..	130
Anal plates .. .. .	2
Sub-caudals .... .	40/40
Total length.....	28½ inches
Length of tail .....	5 inches

Scales of back elongate, ovate, and strongly keeled. Colour black, with the belly whitish, but much clouded with black. Head very slightly broader than the neck, flat, tapering and rounded at the muzzle; the body is cylindrical, the tail rather short. The rostral shield is large and rounded behind; there are two nasal shields with a rather small nostril between them; the loreal is rather higher than long; there are two anterior and two posterior oculars; there are eight upper labials, the third, fourth and fifth abutting on the eye, the sixth and seventh are much the largest; the anterior frontals are as long but much less broad than the posterior, and narrowed a little in front; the vertical is broadest and a little rounded at its anterior edge or base, is gradually narrowed behind, and terminates triangularly.

For the next species I am compelled to create a new genus, and from the locality in which it was found I propose to name it

#### HERBERTOPHIS.

Body round and moderately thick, with flat belly. Tail of moderate length, not distinct from trunk, tapering. Head somewhat depressed, rounded in front and considerably wider behind than the neck. Rostral shield emarginate in front, and extending a little backwards in a rounded triangular form between the anterior frontals; one nasal with nostril in the centre, two anterior and two posterior oculars, scales smooth, in seventeen rows, sub-caudal shields two-rowed. Teeth short, molar like and rounded.

This genus will come under Gray's family or group, Coronellidæ.

#### 6. HERBERTOPHIS PLUMBEUS. n. sp.

Scales in seventeen rows.

Abdominal plates .....	219
Anal plate.....	1
Sub-caudals.....	74/74
Total length .....	4 feet
Length of tail .....	9 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches
Head .....	1 $\frac{3}{4}$ inch

Of an uniform nitid leaden-black colour above, a pure yellowish white on the belly, the scales on the sides showing white edges as

they approach the abdominal plates, which also have one similar mark on each side, the sub-caudals are uniformly marked with a dark basal patch. The nostril is large and deep, the loreal shield is oblong, lying between the second labial and the posterior frontal, the lower anterior ocular is nearly square, and lies between the upper anterior ocular and the third labial, there are nine upper labials, the fourth, fifth and an acute angle of the third touching the eye, the posterior frontals are large, the vertical short, broad, and rounded behind, the superciliaries small and the occipitals very large, the mental shield is small and triangular behind; ten lower labial shields. Eye of medium size.

This is the first of the Family I have known to be found in Australia; a species of *Coronella* has long been quoted as Australian, but I have not seen it, nor have I even heard of any one who had.

7. DENDROPHIS BILOREALIS. n. sp.

Scales in thirteen rows.

Abdominal plates.....	200
Anal plate .....	bifid
Sub-caudals.....	120/120
Total length .....	52 inches
Length of tail.....	14 inches

Of rather robust form, with very tapering tail, the abdominal plates are slightly keeled, giving a flattish appearance to the belly, the sub-caudals are very strongly keeled. The colour is jet black, excepting on the under surface, which is pinkish white on the labial shields, chin and cervical plates, and obscure black on the remainder of the ventral plates. A very fine whitish line marks the course of the ventral keels along their entire length.

The head is rather broad, obtusely rounded in front, flat above, and broader than the neck, the rostral shield is broad, deep, and a little rounded behind, there are two nasals with a large nostril between, two loreals placed exactly above one another, of rather oblong form, the upper one highest; one anterior ocular deeply impressed and equal in height to the two loreals; two small posterior ocular shields. Eye large. The four frontal shields are of about

equal size, and of a nearly square form, the vertical is very broad and somewhat sinuate on its basal margin, behind that it narrows in a curve for about half its length, when it becomes parallel-sided, and finally terminates in a rounded apex; the superciliaries are large and broader than the vertical; there are eight upper labials, the fourth and fifth abutting on the eye.

The obtuse deep head, two loreal shields, and jet black colour, sufficiently indicate an almost more than specific difference between this species and all the other Australian Tree snakes. There are two specimens in the collection, the dimensions given I have taken from the largest.

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NOTES ON SOME CUSTOMS OF THE ABORIGINES OF THE ALBERT  
DISTRICT, NEW SOUTH WALES.

BY C. S. WILKINSON, F.G.S. F.L.S., PRESIDENT.

Mr. W. H. J. Slee, the Government Inspector of Mines, has given me the following particulars regarding a singular ceremony which the Aboriginal tribes of the Mount Poole district perform, when, as is often the case in that arid region, they need rain.

In many parts of that country gypsum occurs abundantly in the soil, but the fibrous variety known as *Satin Spar* is comparatively rare. The latter is highly prized by the natives, and is called by them "rain-stone," for they believe that the Great Spirit uses it in making rain, and probably also because they regard it as solidified rain on account of the resemblance of its fibrous or striated structure to heavy rain; the more pronounced are the striations, the more the stone is valued.

About two years ago, Mr. Slee, when Warden of the Mount Poole Goldfield, was specially invited by the principal chiefs of the Mount Poole and Mokely tribes to attend a ceremony of "making rain." On the day appointed, the natives with the exception of the females, who are not allowed to see either the rain stone or the ceremony, assembled and formed in a circle, in the centre of which stood the oldest chief and Mr. Slee, no other person being permitted to enter the circle. After a great deal of talking, dancing, singing,